

Empire because he and his families were related to the Mongols.

Babur's grandson, Akbar, was equally talented. His name means "Greatest One," and the name seems suitable to the man. He ruled with great wisdom and fairness for almost 40 years.

Akbar was a Muslim, but he believed strongly that people should be allowed to follow the religion they chose. He set an example by letting his wives practice whatever religion they chose. In his government, too, Akbar hired people based on their ability and not their religion. Both Hindus and Muslims gained jobs as government workers.

Akbar ruled fairly. He ended the tax that Hindu pilgrims had to pay. He also ended the tax that all non-Muslims had to pay. To raise money, he imposed a tax based on a percentage of the food grown. This made it easier for peasants to pay the tax. His land policy was less wise. He generously gave land to government officials. However, when they died he took it back and handed it to someone else. As a result, workers did not see any point in caring for the land because they were not preserving it for their children.

He had a strong, well-equipped army that helped him win and maintain control of more lands. His empire held about 100 million people—more than lived in all of Europe at the time.

During Akbar's reign, many changes in culture took place. His policy of blending different cultures produced two new languages. Hindi blended Persian and local languages. It is still widely spoken in India today. Urdu grew out of a mixture of Arabic, Persian, and Hindi and was spoken by the soldiers in Akbar's camp. Today it is the official language of Pakistan. The empire became famous for its book illustrations, which were adapted from the art of Persia. Akbar—who could not read—had a huge library of books and served as a patron to many writers. He also sponsored the building of a new capital city and many buildings.

After Akbar's death in 1605, the empire began to decline. During the reign of Jahangir, the real power was his wife, Nur Jahan. She was an able ruler but had a bitter political battle with one of Jahangir's sons. Since that son found help from the Sikhs—members of a separate religion—that group became the target of attacks by the government.

Jahangir's successor was Shah Jahan, and he too chose not to follow Akbar's policy of religious toleration. Shah Jahan was a great patron of the arts

and built many beautiful buildings, including the famous Taj Mahal. It was a tomb for his beloved wife. However, his ambitious building plans required high taxes, and the people suffered under his rule.

His son Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years and made the empire grow once again with new conquests. However, his rule brought about new problems. A serious Muslim, the new ruler put harsh new laws in place. He punished Hindus and destroyed their temples, which produced a rebellion that managed to take control of part of his empire. At the same time, the Sikhs had become skilled fighters, and they won control of another part of the empire. To fight these battles, Aurangzeb had to increase taxes. Since he only taxed Hindus, not Muslims, this move only made large numbers of people more and more angry.

After his death, the empire fell apart, and local leaders took control of small areas. There continued to be a Mughal emperor, but he was only a figure-head, not a ruler with any real power.

Review

1. **Clarifying** How did the Ottomans treat non-Muslims?
2. **Summary** What were Suleyman's major accomplishments?
3. **Determining Main Ideas** Despite their brilliant rule, what critical mistake did Suleiman and Shah Abbas make?
4. **Drawing Conclusions** What evidence of cultural blending can you find in Akbar's rule?
5. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** How did Akbar's successors contribute to the end of the Mughal Empire?